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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR IN PAKISTAN

REF: A. STATE 127448 B. 08 ISLAMABAD 005262

¶1. (U) Summary: The Government of Pakistan (GOP) continues to recognize the importance of the elimination of the worst forms of child labor and is slowly taking steps to achieve this goal. There have been pockets of improvement over the past year but the main problem for Pakistan continues to be the lack of a comprehensive strategy to deal with the problem as a whole. It is not enough to provide alternatives to child labor and rehabilitation; the GOP must also monitor and enforce existing regulations. End Summary.

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UPDATE: REGULATIONS AND INITIATIVES
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¶2. (U) The GOP, in coordination with the European Commission (EC), has continued the National Time Bound Program that was originally conceived by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), which expired December 2008. This new National Time Bound Program, which runs from 2009 through 2016, is focused on eliminating child labor at the district level. The program has been launched initially in Hyderabad and Peshawar, and will be extended to other districts. The EC will contribute 4.6 million Euros for this program. This new Time Bound Program will continue to reflect ILO conventions 138 and 182, which concern the minimum age for employment and the elimination of the worst forms of child labor, respectively.

¶3. (U) The GOP is also expected to launch its second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP2) soon, which will be more focused on child labor than the initial PRSP and include educational opportunities for working children. The PRSP2 is expected to increase access to micro-credit loans for families of working children. The draft PRSP2 has been reviewed by the Ministries of Labor, Education, and Finance, as well as by the ILO and various NGO's. The GOP started the original PRSP, a strategy for increasing growth and reducing poverty, in 2004 when it entered into Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with the IMF. The GOP has taken it upon itself to continue with these policies and incorporate them in PRSP2.

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IMPROVEMENTS

14. (U) The most positive development this year has been the interest in eliminating the worst forms of child labor on the provincial level. The Punjab Government has established Child Protection Bureaus in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Rahim Yar Khan, Multan and Faisalabad to protect and rehabilitate street children, especially beggars. These bureaus are assigned judges and police and literally pick up child beggars off the street, take them to a judge to be processed, and then ensure the children are fed, housed, and educated. If they are addicted to drugs, they are put in a rehabilitation facility for several weeks and monitored to make sure there is no relapse. The Punjab Government has budgeted Rs. 140 million (USD 1.8 million) for these programs.

15. (U) The Balochistan Government is also making headway in its efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in its province. The Balochistan Government has identified two goals: to promote legitimate overseas employment for Pakistani youth (50,000 over five years) aged 15 to 25 and to eradicate the worst forms of child labor in Balochistan within five years. The Balochistan Government is working with the ILO to design these two ambitious programs and is organizing a conference in Islamabad in April to jointly present them.

16. (U) The Pakistani Bait-ul-Mal, the government agency responsible for distributing money to the poor, has increased its efforts in fighting child labor. Bait-ul-Mal has increased the number of child labor centers from 18 to 150 since 2002. These centers provide

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food, school uniforms, education, and a stipend, specifically for children formerly engaged in the worst forms of child labor.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

17. (U) Monitoring and enforcement of child labor differs between the formal and informal sectors. Child labor is rarely found in the formal sector (i.e., businesses that are registered and taxed). Unfortunately, the GOP has not improved its record on monitoring and enforcing its regulations on the worst forms of child labor in the informal sector, which consists of small, undocumented workshops and very small scale industry, and is consequently more difficult for the GOP to oversee.

18. (U) Independent monitoring, however, remains successful. The Independent Monitoring Association for Child Labor (IMAC), a coalition of employers, unions and the ILO, effectively monitors child labor conditions in the sporting goods industry. The GOP is trying to replicate this system in other industries and areas throughout the country with technical assistance from the ILO. The ILO is engaged with the GOP and performs monitoring training at the Civil Service Academy, National Institute of Public Administration, the Police Academy and other GOP institutions.

19. (U) The GOP is still planning on conducting a national survey on child labor in conjunction with the ILO (reftel B). Unfortunately, the GOP did not conduct the national census this year. Once the census is complete, the ILO, through its Statistical Information and Monitoring Program on Child Labor (SIMPOC), will provide technical assistance to the Federal Bureau of Statistics to complete the survey on child labor. ILO envisions initiating the survey in January/February 2010 with a target completion date of early 2011.

UPDATED STATISTICS

10. (U) Working children, 10-14 years 2006-2007: 13.31 percent
Working boys, 10-14 years 2006-2007: 16.92 percent
Working girls, 10-14 years 2006-2007: 9.18 percent
Gross primary enrollment rate 2006-2007: 91 percent

Net primary enrollment rate 2006-2007: 50 percent
Survival rate to grade 5 2006-2007: 70 percent

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COMMENT
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¶11. (SBU) Comment. The GOP is making progress in the elimination of the worst forms of child labor. It has a better understanding of the issues than previously but needs to improve its comprehensive strategy. Unfortunately, the recent economic difficulties are causing more people to fall below the poverty line, thus increasing the likelihood of children participating in the worst forms of child labor. The increased involvement of the provincial governments is encouraging; however, their efforts would have more impact if coordinated on a national level. Enforcement and monitoring still remain problematic. The GOP can rehabilitate and provide for these children, but it must also adequately monitor and enforce regulations on the improper use of children in the informal sector. The GOP needs to successfully monitor the informal sector and also replicate the IMAC model if it is to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in Pakistan. This takes major resources, however, and GOP's labor inspection regime has always been inadequate; the spending caps put in place by the IMF's Standby Arrangement will make further progress even more difficult.

PATTERSON